Gunston & The Book Bunnies

The Gunston Trust

THE TALE OF PADDY MUSKRAT

A Sleepy-Time Tale

By Arthur Scott Bailey

Sleepy-Time Tales
THE TALE OF PADDY MUSKRAT
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THE NEW HAT

The Tale of Paddy Muskrat

I
Paddy's Little Joke

The Gristmill where Farmer Green had his wheat ground into flour stood near a mill-pond.

Now, Farmer Green always supposed that the pond was there so that the miller would have water to turn his mill. But Paddy Muskrat thought that the pond had been put there in

order to give him and his neighbors a pleasant place in which to live.

His house was dug out of the bank of the pond. But you might have walked right over it without knowing it was there. Paddy reached it through a long tunnel, the door of which was hidden by the water. And there he lived with his wife. They liked their home. And so long as Paddy did as his wife wanted him to do, they were quite happy and never had a quarrel.

Sometimes Paddy Muskrat stayed away from home more than Mrs. paddy liked. You see, he was very fond of swimming. In fact, that was why he was called Paddy, because he had begun to paddle in the water when he was so young that he was hardly more than a little, round ball.

To be sure, Mrs. Paddy was a fine swimmer herself. But she used to say that her

husband ought to have been a fish; for he never seemed to get enough swimming to satisfy him. He had a way, in summer, of spending a good deal of time right where a big willow flung its shadow upon the water. And he might have been seen there often, swimming round and round in a circle and trying to catch his tail.

Mrs. Paddy used to tell him that he was too old for such foolishness. But it was a game he liked. And he never grew tired of it.

Even in winter, when the water was freezing cold, Paddy went for a swim almost every day. In one way he enjoyed his winter more than his summer swims, for he was quite safe from enemies when the ice covered the pond. In fact, unless Peter Mink or one of his relations came prowling about beneath the ice, there was nothing to trouble Paddy and his wife at that season.

In summer Paddy Muskrat had many enemies. Johnnie Green was by no means the least of these. He was continually setting traps to catch Paddy, who was the biggest of all the Muskrat family that lived in Pleasant Valley.

Now, Johnnie Green had succeeded in catching a good many of Paddy's distant cousins. If you could have seen the side of Farmer Green's woodshed, half covered by the skins Johnnie Green had nailed there, you would understand why Paddy was usually pretty careful where he stepped.

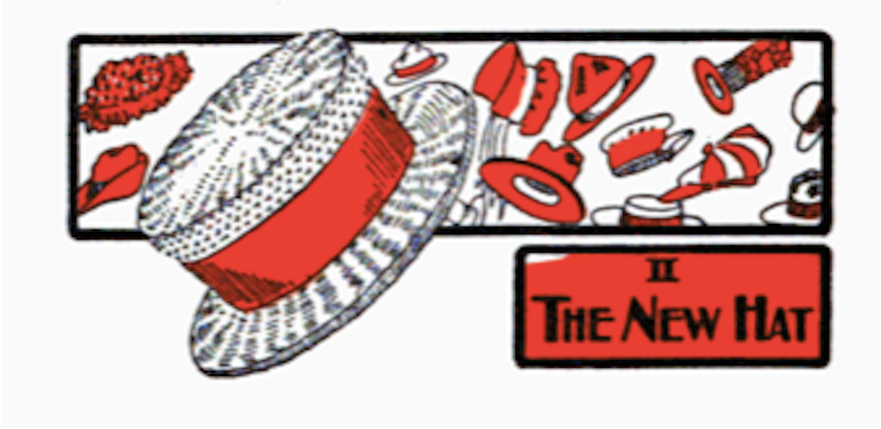
And when you hear that Mr. Crow told him one day that Johnnie had saved a place on the side of the woodshed especially for him, you can see why Paddy Muskrat was in no hurry to occupy it.

Luckily for him, he never came to such a sad end. Though when he vexed Mrs. Paddy

she said, sometimes, that if he should get caught perhaps it would teach him not to stay away from home so much.

And then Paddy Muskrat always told her that being nailed to Farmer Green's woodshed ought to teach him to stay away all the time.

Of course, that was just a little joke of his. But Mrs. Patty never cared for it.



II
The New Hat

One day Paddy Muskrat came home looking quite distressed. His wife noticed that he seemed to be in trouble.

"What has happened, my dear?" She asked him. "You are looking very sad. And you've lost your hat. I hope you haven't been in a fight," she said, as she peered at Paddy anxiously.

"No!" said Paddy. "There's been no fight. As I was swimming near the mill-dam my hat came off and the water swept it right over the dam and down the stream."

"There!" Mrs. Paddy cried. "I knew that would happen! That's the fourth hat you've lost this summer. You remember I wanted to sew an elastic band on your hat, to snap under your chin."

"None of my friends keep their hats on in that way," said Paddy Muskrat. "But I shall have to do something. I can't keep losing hats like this. I'm going over to buy a new hat of Jimmy Rabbit and I'll ask him what I'd better do."

"Jimmy Rabbit!" Mrs. paddy exclaimed. "I didn't know he was a hatter."

Mr. Crow tells me he has just opened a fine hat store. He has all the latest styles of hats—so Mr. Crow says."

"Do go over there at once, then!" Mrs. Paddy urged her husband. "I hope you'll find a becoming hat," she said. "A hat with a pink ribbon on it would look well on you. I'm sorry I'm so busy, for I'd like to go and help you choose one."

"But paddy Muskrat was not sorry. He shuddered at the mere idea of wearing a hat with a pink ribbon.

"I'll see what Jimmy Rabbit has," he promised. And then he started for the hat-store.

It was just as Mr. Crow had said, Jimmy Rabbit had a fine array of hats. And though he had hats with ribbons of many different colors, to Paddy Muskrat's great relief he hadn't a single one with a pink ribbon on it.

Paddy tried on a hat that took his fancy.

"Have you a looking-glass?" he asked Jimmy Rabbit.

"Certainly!" Jimmy replied. "That pool over there in the brook is the best mirror you ever saw."

So Paddy went and looked into the pool.

"This hat makes my ears look too big." he objected.

"Big ears are quite the fashion this season," Jimmy Rabbit told him. "As you see, I'm wearing mine quite large. The trouble with this hat is that it makes your ears look not too big, but too little. The way to make your ears look as big as possible is to wear the smallest hat you can keep on your head. Here," he said, "is one that will just suit you." And he clapped upon Paddy Muskrat's head a little, flat straw hat with a narrow brim. "Now go and

look at yourself in my mirror!" Jimmy urged. "You'll like this one, I know."

Once more Paddy looked into the deep pool. At first he thought the hat looked very queer. But the longer he gazed at his reflection the better he liked it.

"There's just one thing about this hat that I don't care for," he told Jimmy Rabbit. "It has a green ribbon, and I want a red one.

Jimmy Rabbit promptly found a hat exactly like the one on Paddy's head - except that it's ribbon was red.

"Now—" Jimmy said —"now you ought to feel pretty happy. For you won't see a more stylish hat anywhere in Pleasant Valley."

But Paddy Muskrat didn't seem happy at all.

"I forgot one thing," he remarked. "I don't see how I can keep this hat on my head when

I'm in the water. It's so small it will be sure to fall off. I don't believe I'd better take it, after all"

For a few moments Jimmy rabbit looked disappointed. And then he said"

"Let me think! Give me six seconds in which to think and I'll tell you of some way to fix the hat so it won't trouble you."

Paddy Muskrat agreed to that. And he sat down, with the hat on his head, and waited.

III

Pink or Red

After Jimmy Rabbit had thought for exactly six seconds, while Paddy Muskrat waited, he jumped up and knocked his heels together twice.

"I have it!" he cried. "I know how to fix that hat so it won't fall off your head. Let me take it!"

"You're not going to sew an elastic band on it, I hope!" Paddy said, as he handed the hat to Jimmy rabbit.

"No, indeed!" answered Jimmy. "I've thought of a better way than that." And Paddy watched him while he went to the brook and found a round, flat stone, which he crammed into the crown of the hat.

"There!" Jimmy Rabbit said. "This stone will make the hat stay in place. You won't have a bit of trouble with it." He smiled at Paddy Muskrat most cheerfully. But Paddy Muskrat did not smile at him at all.

"What's the matter now?" Jimmy inquired.

"There's another thing that I forgot," said Paddy. "This red ribbon—is it a fast color?"

"Well," said Jimmy Rabbit, "I can promise you that no matter how fast you travel, that ribbon will reach any place you go to at exactly the moment you get there—so long as the hat stays on your head."

"You don't understand," Paddy Muskrat told him. "I mean, will the color stay the same when it gets wet?"

At that question Jimmy Rabbit looked a bit anxious. He swallowed once or twice and coughed two or three times before he answered. You see, he had to have a little time to think.

The ribbon will be just as handsome after it's wet as it is now," he said with another cheerful smile.

But Paddy Muskrat was not yet satisfied.

"I'll chew an end of the ribbon and see what happens," Paddy remarked.

But Jimmy Rabbit wouldn't let him do that.

"This," he said "is a hat-store—not an eating house. How would my hats look if everybody chewed the ends of the ribbons? You wear the hat home. And if your wife likes it, you're to keep it. And if she doesn't like it, you're to bring it back. Is that a bargain?"

Paddy Muskrat said that it was. So he went home. His head felt very queer, on account of the stone in his hat. And when he jumped into the brook to go home he found that he could swim under water much more easily than every before. You see, the heavy stone kept his head down. But he soon found that it was very hard work to thrust his head out of the water, to snatch a breath of air.

"Probably I'll get use to it," he told himself. "But I don't believe Jimmy Rabbit remembered that I have to breathe now and then."

Paddy reached home at last. And as soon as his wife saw him she began to smile.

"You seem to like my new hat," Paddy said to her.

"Yes!" she replied. "I'm glad to see that for once you chose the kind I like.

That's as pretty a pink ribbon as I ever saw on a hat in all my life."

"Pink!" Paddy Muskrat cried. "It's not pink! It's red!" He snatched the that off his head and looked at it. And sure enough, the ribbon was a bright pink!

"Dear me!" Paddy exclaimed. "The ribbon was red; but the water had made the color run." And he put the hat on his head again and started back to find Jimmy Rabbit.

"Look here!" Paddy said, as soon as he reached the hat store by the deep pool.

"This red ribbon turned pink in the water and you'll have to give me another."

"Does your wife like it?" Jimmy Rabbit asked him.

"Why—er—yes, she does!" answered Paddy.

"Then you'll have to keep it!" Jimmy Rabbit declared. "That was our bargain, you remember. And I should say—" he added__" I should say that anybody who can find a hat that pleases his wife ought to consider himself lucky."

IV
Sweet-Flag

Something was puzzling Paddy Muskrat. Grandmother Green had come to the mill-pond, riding in a wagon drawn by the old horse, Ebenezer. She had tied Ebenezer to the fence near the barn. And Paddy Muskrat watched her while she went to the

upper end of the pond and busied herself among the sweet-flag that are there.

At first Paddy thought she was playing. He had never seen anybody except boys and girls playing near the pond. But he knew of no reason why Grandmother Green should not play if she wanted to.

He hardly thought that she would hurt him—or that she could, even if she should want to.

Wondering what game the old lady was playing, Paddy Muskrat crept nearer. Then he saw that Johnnie Green's grandmother was digging something. And whatever it was that she dug, she put it in a basket that she had brought with her.

All at once Paddy grew very angry. Grandmother Green was digging sweet-flag! Paddy liked those sweet, tender, juicy roots himself. And he thought the old lady had no right to come there and take any.

But after a while Paddy changed his mind about Grandmother Green. At last she set her basket on the ground and little by little-as she gathered sweet-flag—she moved further and further away from it. She was filling her apron with the flag root now. Paddy hoped she would stop soon. And he stole nearer to see how much of his goodies Grandmother Green was "stealing," as he called it.

Then Paddy came upon the basket. It was half full of beautiful pinkish roots.

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SWEET FLAG

The Tale of Paddy Muskrat

And Patty Muskrat suddenly decided that Grandmother Green was a good, kind, old lady; and that she had been gathering sweet-flag especially for him. That—Paddy thought—that was the reason why she had left the basket behind her.

He wished he might carry it home with him. But it was too big for Paddy to manage. So there was only one thing left for him to do. And Paddy Muskrat crawled right inside the basket and did it.

Yes! Paddy began to eat the sweet, juicy flag. He ate it fast, too because it tasted so good and because he wanted to eat all he could before Grandmother Green came back to get her basket.

He was sorry that she returned as soon as she did. He heard the old lady as she pushed through the rustling flags and rushes; and he jumped out of the basket and slipped away before she saw him.

"Dear me!" Grandmother Green exclaimed, as she picked up her basket. "I thought I had dug more flag than that!" She emptied her apron into the basket. "I'm afraid —" she said__ "I'm afraid I haven't enough."

So she started off to get more flag. And Paddy Muskrat promptly stole back again, to finish his meal.

If Paddy Muskrat hadn't at last eaten all the sweet-flag he could possible crowd into himself, Grandmother Green would never have filled her basket.

What surprised Paddy most was her taking the basket of flag away with her, when she left the pond.

"That's queer!" he said to himself. "If she gathered it for me, why does she carry it off?. . .Maybe she expects me to come to the farm-house whenever I'm hungry."

And if Paddy hadn't told the whole story to old Mr. Turtle, no doubt he would have gone to Farmer Green's house the very next day.

But Mr. Turtle soon put that idea out of Paddy Muskrat's head.

"Grandmother Green wasn't gathering that sweet-flag for you," Mr. Turtle told him. "Tomorrow is Johnnie Green's birthday. And his grandmother is going to make a present

for him. She will boil the sweet-flag in maple syrup. It makes the finest candy you ever tasted," he explained.

Now, Paddy Muskrat had never tasted any candy in all his life.

"I should say—" he said—"I should say that that was a fine way to spoil good sweet-flag . . . Anyhow," he added, "I hope it will make Johnnie Green ill, because it's my sweet-flag that his grandmother took."

But old Mr. Turtle laughter at him.

"Grandmother Green has been coming to this pond for sweet-flag ever since she was a girl," he said. "Long before you were born she use to come here. I saw her myself, when I was young. . . Maybe you think it was your flag then," said Mr. Turtle.

For a moment Paddy Muskrat looked a bit foolish. And then he tried to look very fierce.

"If she's been coming here all these years I should think she must have had more than her share of sweet-flag by this time," he cried.

V
Visitors

Paddy Muskrat had some good news to tell his wife. He thought she would be pleased to hear it; so he went home as soon as Mr. Crow had told it to him.

"Well, my dear!" Paddy said to Mrs. Paddy, whom he found busily making the beds in the family bedroom, "Mr. Crow has just

brought me a message from my cousin Josiah. And I know you'll be glad to hear it. He's coming to make us a visit!"

Mrs. Muskrat didn't look quite so pleased as Paddy had expected.

"Who invited him?" she asked.

"Why—er I told Mr. Crow a few days ago if he should happen to see my cousin, to give him my regards and tell him I would like to see him." Paddy Muskrat seemed to feel very uncomfortable.

"When is your cousin coming?" Mrs. Paddy Muskrat wanted to know.

"Oh, certainly!" Paddy told her. "At least, Mr. Crow didn't say anything about that."

"This is pretty short notice," Mrs. Paddy remarked. "I shall have to make up another bed; and you had better go and find something extra

for dinner. Freshwater clams would be good—and plenty of lily bulbs for a salad."

So Paddy Muskrat hurried off. And in a little while he had brought home more feed just as his wife had suggested.

"That ought to be enough for one extra person," she told Paddy, "even if your cousin Josiah should be a hearty eater . . .I hope—" she added—"I hope he won't be late for dinner."

The words were hardly out of Mrs. Paddy Muskrat's mouth when a great noise reached her ears from the long hall that led to the room where she and her husband were talking.

"What's that?" she cried.

Before Paddy could answer, a fat smiling person thrust his head into the room, without so much as knocking. It was Paddy's cousin Josiah!

"We're here!" he said. And soon he and his wife and twelve children crowded into the room.

Poor Mrs. Paddy Muskrat didn't know what to do. She had only one extra bed; and dinner for only three people. And there she was, with fourteen guests to take care of!

"We're pretty hungry," Cousin Josiah said, "so we'll sit right down and eat this good lunch that you've prepared for us. Later, of course, we'll have dinner."

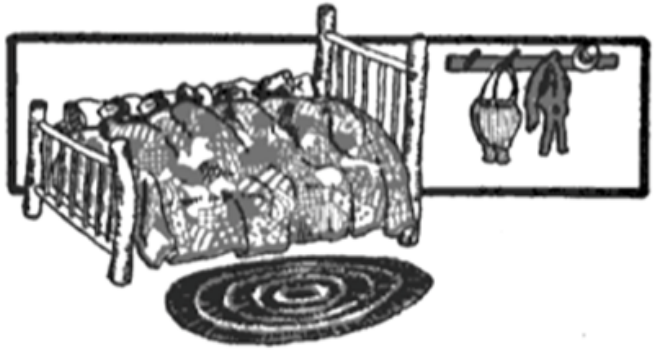
And all fourteen of the the newcomers fell upon the food, which disappeared as if by magic.

"Now," said Cousin Josiah' wife, "we would all like to take a nap, because we've traveled a long distance. How many beds have you?"

Mrs. Paddy Muskrat said in a faint voice that she had only three.

"That will be enough," said Mrs. Cousin Josiah. "We can lie on them crosswise, you know." And soon the visitors were fast asleep.

But Paddy Muskrat and his wife did not go to sleep. They sat down and looked at each other for a long time, without saying a word.



VI
The Hungry Cousins

Mrs. Paddy Muskrat was terribly upset. All the food was gone. And she and her husband had no place to sleep for the visitors had taken every bed in the house.

"How long are your relations going to stay with us?" she asked Paddy.

"Oh, just tonight, I suppose," he replied bravely.

"Did Mr. Crow say that?" she inquired.

"N-no!" Paddy said.

"Then—" said Mrs. Paddy—"then how do you know they aren't expecting to stay a who year with us?" And at that question Paddy Muskrat looked more worried than ever. While his cousin Josiah and his wife and their twelve children were taking their naps, Paddy went out and gathered all the food he could find. He knew that as soon as they awoke they would expect to have their dinner.

Paddy worked hard. And it was lucky he did; for Mrs. Paddy had no sooner told him that she thought there was food enough for their visitors than the whole company trooped into the dining room.

"I'm glad to see," said fat Cousin Josiah, "that you have plenty to eat. For our nap has made us all hungry again." Then everybody sat

down. And the food disappeared almost as fast as it had when the guests first came.

They were wonderfully rapid eaters. Paddy and his wife had barely begun their own dinner before there was nothing more left to eat.

"Very good!" said Cousin Josiah, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. Mrs. Paddy sundered at his bad manners! "Now we'll all go to bed; for eating always makes my family sleepy."

Paddy Muskrat and his wife glanced at each other. If eating made their visitors sleepy and sleeping made them hungry it was plain that it was going to be no joke to feed them.

"Anyhow," Paddy Muskrat said to Mrs. Paddy, when Cousin Josiah and his family were asleep once more, "you and I won't have to worry about having no place to sleep, because we shall have no time to sleep. We shall have to

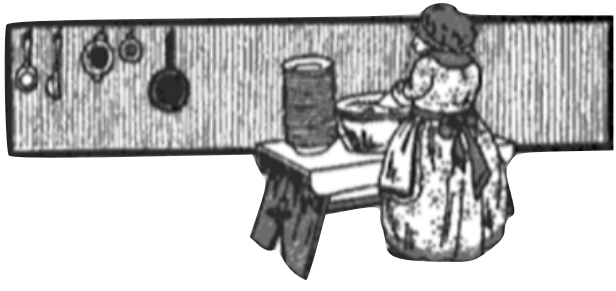
keep awake all the time, getting food for those fourteen people."

But Mrs. Paddy Muskrat took little comfort in that thought.

"They are your relations," she said.

"You invited them. So you must not expect me to work all the while in order to feed them"

So the next day Paddy Muskrat fed his hungry cousins as best he could. He had looked forward to seeing Cousin Josiah and talking with him. But since Cousin Josiah did another but eat and sleep, there was no time to say more than few words to him.



VII
Mr.Crow's Fault

On the second day of his visit, Paddy Muskrat's cousin Josiah began to complain that there wasn't enough food.

"I find myself growing weak," he said. "And if I get too weak, of course I shall not be able to make the long journey home again."

"When are you planning to go?" Mrs. Paddy inquired quickly.

"About the time the fall rains begin," Cousin Josiah told her.

"Quick!" Paddy Muskrat cried. "Bring some water! She has fainted!"

It was true. Mrs. paddy had fallen upon the floor in a faint. You see, the fall rains were a long way off. And the mere thought of having those fourteen people in her house all that time was a little more than she could bear.

Cousin Josiah brought some water. And soon Mrs. Paddy opened her eyes again.

"She's growing weak, too," said Cousin Josiah. "It's just as I told you," he declared, turning to Paddy Muskrat. "You don't bring home enough food."

Paddy began to lose his temper.

"Then you had better help me," he suggested.

Cousin Josiah yawned.

"I'm altogether too sleepy to help you today," he answered. And he went into his bedroom.

"How's your brother Ben?" Paddy asked his cousin the next day.

Josiah Muskrat's mouth was so full of food that he could not answer for a few moments. But at last he said:

"I haven't any brother named Ben"

Paddy Muskrat looked surprised.

"How's Uncle Simon?" he inquired.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Cousin Josiah snapped. He was annoyed because he had to talk—for in order to talk he had to stop eating.

"Why, my Uncle Simon is you father!" Paddy muskrat exclaimed.

"You're mistaken," said Cousin Josiah.

"My father's name is Matthew Muskrat." And he seized a lily bulb and began eating it greedily.

Paddy was astonished when he heard that. And then he cried:

"You are not my cousin Josiah at all! You're a fraud—that's what you are! And you had better take your wife and your twelve children and leave my house at once!"

The fat gentleman looked at his wife. "It's time to go, Ezekiel!" she said hastily. "This person is too rude. I don't want to stay here any longer."

"Ezekiel!" Paddy Muskrat shouted. "So that's your name, is it?"

But the fat gentleman did not answer. He had already run out of the house, followed by is wife and children.

Afterward, old Mr. Crow admitted that he might have made a mistake.

"I may have given your message to the wrong person," he said.

"You certainly did!" Paddy Muskrat told him. "And it's lucky I discovered it when I did. If I had taken care of those fourteen strangers until the fall rains began I would have been pretty angry with you."

For a few minuted Mr. Crow looked uncomfortable. But he soon recovered his spits.

"After all, it might have been worse," he remarked. "Ezekiel Muskrat might have had twenty-four children, instead of only twelve."

VIII
The Eating House

After the visit of the false cousin Josiah, and his wife and their twelve children, Mrs. Paddy Muskrat told her husband that she needed a rest.

"I'm not able to do any work for a week," she said. "And since Uncle Sammy Coon has given up keeping a store, and has an eating

house instead, we'll go over to his place near the swamp and get our meals."

Paddy consented to the plan. And because they were both feeling hungry they started at once for the swamp.

When they reached Uncle Sammy Coon's house, that old gentleman seemed glad to see them.

"Come right in and sit down!" he cried. He had on a long, white apron and wore a white cap on his head.

Paddy led his wife to a toadstool table—the one nearest the door. He did not feel quite comfortable inside Uncle Sammy Coon's house. And if there should be any trouble he wanted to be able to slip out of the door quickly.

"What will you have to eat?" Uncle Sammy inquired.

"I wish you wouldn't come quite so near," Paddy said nervously. "Your voice is so loud that I can't hear you well when you are so close to me."

"Then I'd suggest—" said Uncle Sammy —"I'd suggest that you take that table over there!" He pointed to a table at the back of the room.

But Paddy Muskrat shook his head. "Your'll have to do as I say," he told Uncle Sammy, "or we'll go somewhere else."

For a moment Uncle Sammy Coon looked quite fierce. But he soon smiled again. And moving away a few steps, he asked once more what Paddy and his wife would like to have for dinner.

"Fresh-water clams!" said Paddy Muskrat.

THE EATING HOUSE

Uncle Sammy bowed, and soon he brought two plates, each with one clam on it.

Mr. and Mrs. Muskrat opened the shells, pulled out the clams, and began to eat them.

"We'll want more than just one clam apiece," Paddy remarked.

"More than two apiece, you mean!" said Uncle Sammy Coon. "You're eating one clam and there's a clam-shell on your plate; so that makes two," he said.

Paddy looked worried when he heard that. "That's a new way of counting clams," he ventured.

"It's my way," retorted Uncle Sammy. "This is my eating house. And I shall run it just as I please," he growled.

"Oh, of course! Paddy Muskrat said hastily. "But we shall want more clams, anyhow. Bring us each a plateful, please!"

Uncle Sammy Coon took up the plates and limped away with them. And in a few minutes he returned with the plates heaped high.

"There!" he cried. "That ought to be enough for anybody. Eat all you want!"

But Paddy Muskrat soon discovered that there were very few clams, either on he wife's plate or his own. Uncle Sammy had put six knives and six forks on each plate. And naturally that left little room for clams.

"We don't need all these knives and forks," Paddy Muskrat objected.

"It's my way of serving fresh water clams," Uncle Sammy Coon insisted.

"You ordered two platefuls. And you certainly can't say that these plates aren't full."

"Very well!" Paddy answered. And gathering up all twelve of the forks and all twelve of the knives, he stowed them away in

his pocket, when Uncle Sammy was not looking at him.

"Two more platefuls, please!" Paddy Muskrat called, as soon as he and Mrs. Paddy had finished their clams.

When Uncle Sammy took there plates he noticed that something was wrong. At first he couldn't tell just what was the trouble. But in a moment he turned almost white.

"Sakes alive!" he cried. "If you haven't gone and eaten the knives and forks!"

IX
Don't Eat The Spoons

Uncle Sammy Coon was terribly upset, because he thought the Paddy Muskrat and his wife had each eaten six knives and six forks. He didn't know that Paddy had hidden them all in his pocket.

"This is terrible!" Uncle Sammy groaned. "Since I've been running an eating house, no

one has done such a thing. I haven't a knife nor a fork left in the house. And I don't know what to do.

"Wee—I'll tell you what to do," said Paddy Muskrat. "You can bring us some more clams."

So Uncle Sammy bore their plates away again. And pretty soon he came back with them. This time he had put twelve spoons on each plate, so of course there was very little room left for clams.

"There!" he said "Don't eat the spoons, whatever you do!"

"Certainly not!" said Paddy Muskrat. And as soon as Uncle Sammy's back was turned he put the whole twenty-four spoons into his pocket.

The moment Uncle Sammy looked around he saw that the spoons were gone. He almost

fainted, he was so upset. And he sank into one of his chairs and fanned himself with his cap.

"This is terrible!" he said. "Here I've lost all my knives and forks and spoons! I'm afraid I'm ruined. I shall have to stop running an eating house."

A little later he sprang up. And seizing Paddy Muskrat's coat-collar, he shook him hard, for he was angry. As he shook Paddy, the knives and forks and spoons made a great rattling in Paddy's pocket. But Uncle Sammy Coon thought the rattling was paddy's stomach. And he was so frightened by the sound that he let go of Paddy's collar and sat right down on one of the toadstool tables.

Now, Uncle Sammy was quite fat. And he sat down so heavily that the toadstool table broke and sent him sprawling upon the floor.

When he rose he was angrier than ever. "If I wasn't afraid of hurting my knives and forks and spoons, I'd shake you all to pieces! he cried.

"Bring us two more platefuls of clams!" That was all Paddy Muskrat said.

Uncle Sammy Coon went away muttering to himself. And that time he came back with the plates full of fine fresh water-claims.

"This is not my way of running an eating house," Uncle Sammy grumbled. "But there's nothing else I can do."

At last Paddy Muskrat and his wife had all they wanted to eat. And when Uncle Sammy started to take away the empty clam shells, they stood up and made ready to go home.

"Wait a moment!" said Uncle Sammy Coon. "You haven't paid me yet. You own me for four dozen clams, one dozen knives, one

dozen forks, and two dozen spoons. That makes eight dozen in all."

"All right!" Paddy answered. "Give me all my clam shells and I will pay you."

"What clam shells?" asked Uncle Sammy.

"Why the clam shells I bought!" Paddy Muskrat exclaimed. "You took them away. And I supposed, of course that you've been saving them for me."

"I threw them into the creek," Uncle Sammy explained, with a worried look. "The creek is right back of my kitchen. And I make it a rule to throw all my clam shells out of the window into the water."

Paddy Muskrat pretended to be very must surprised.

"I don't care what you do with your clam shells," he said. "But you have no business to throw mine away like that. I shall not pay you a

penny unless you give them to me." He edged toward the door, pushing his wife ahead of him.

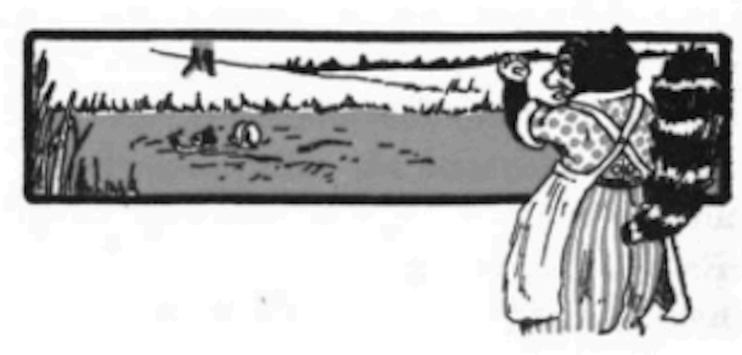
Suddenly Uncle Sammy Coon gave a cry of rage. He leaped at Paddy. But he was too slow. Paddy Muskrat and his wife ran toward the creek and jumped in. But just before he jumped, Paddy pulled the knives and forks and spoons out of his pocket and dropped them on the bank. They were so heavy that he was afraid they would drag him to the bottom of the creek.

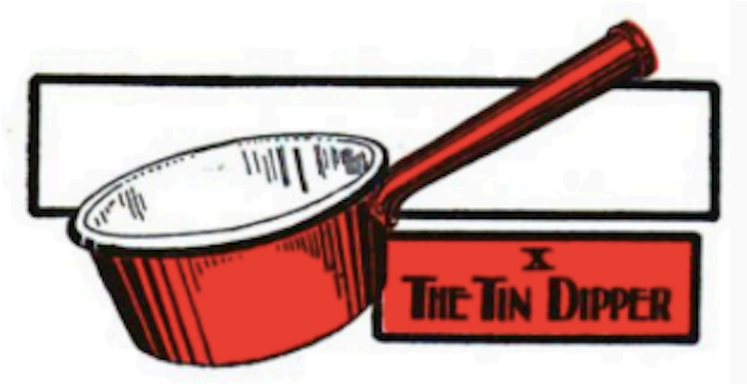
Uncle Sammy Coon stood on the bank of the creek and roared as he watched Paddy and his wife swimming away. Then he happened to look down. And there were his knives and forks and spoons right at his feet! He gathered them up joyfully.

"I sha'n't have to stop running an eating house after all!" Uncle Sammy exclaimed. "And

the next time Mr. and Mrs. paddy Muskrat come to my place for a meal I shall lock the door—after they are inside! Then maybe they won't be able to run away like this."

But Paddy and his wife never visited Uncle Sammy's eating house again. Mrs. Paddy said she preferred to eat in her own home. And Paddy said that he thought a good home dinner was far better then anything they could get at Uncle Sammy Coon's.





X
The Tin Dipper

So many wagons passed along the road that ran by the mill dam that Paddy Muskrat paid little attention to them. But one day when he had wandered over near the fence by the roadside he had a great fright.

A big covered cart came jolting along, making the most terrible noise Paddy had every heard. It was hung all over with queerly shaped

shining things, which gave forth a deafening din as they rattled and clattered and jangled and dangled.

Paddy Muskrat ran towards the mill pond. He was so scared that he forgot to slap the water with his tail to warn his friends to run and hide.

He was worried about his wife. But he found her at home. So they both stayed there for a long time and never went outside their house again until it was quite dark.

Then Paddy said he was going to call on Mr. Turtle and ask him about the dreadful-sounding wagon.

"He's lived here so many years that he may know what it is," said Paddy.

For once Mr. Turtle was puzzled.

"It wasn't a mowing-machine, was it?" he inquired.

But Paddy said he knew a mowing-machine when he saw one; and it couldn't have been that.

"Then I'd say it was a threshing-machine," said Mr. Turtle.

But Paddy Muskrat had seen threshing-machines. And he knew it couldn't have been one of those either.

Mr. Turtle thought and thought. And finally he said:

"There are so many new-fangled machines nowadays that it's hard to say just what you saw. It's just possible that it was a steamboat."

"I've heard of steamboats," Paddy Muskrat remarked. "But the thing that passed here today went on land. And steamboats, they, go in the water."

"Maybe they do," said Mr. Turtle. "But perhaps this one had run away . . . Did you hear it whistle?"

Paddy said that he hadn't heard it whistle, but that it seemed all ready to screech.

"No doubt that was it," Mr. Turtle told him. "So long as it stays out of our pond, we've nothing to worry about. But if it should come in here, I should leave at once."

Paddy Muskrat felt less uneasy, after his talk with Mr. Turtle. But not long afterward he heard some news that set him to worrying again. Benjamin Bat told him that the strange wagon was spending the night in Farmer Green's barnyard.

"I flew right into it, before I saw it," Benjamin Bat said. "And I nearly got caught in a trap that hung on one side of it."

Paddy Muskrat began to shiver. He shivered so hard that Benjamin Bat said:

"I'm afraid you have chills-and-fever. That's what you get by living in this damp mill-pond. I advise you and your wife to come over and live where I do, high up under the roof of Farmer Green's barn. It's perfectly dry there."

Paddy Muskrat said he would think about it. And when he went home to go to bed he spoke to his wife about the matter.

But Mrs. Paddy wouldn't think of such a thing.

"I like this house too well to move away from it," she said. "There just one thing that I need to make me perfectly contented here."

"What's that?" Paddy inquired.

"A new tin dipper!" said Mrs. Paddy.

"Goodness!" he exclaimed. "You might just as well ask for a piano. Where do you suppose I can get a new tin dipper?"

"You're a man," said Mrs. paddy. "And you ought to know."

When she said that, Paddy Muskrat knew that there would be no peace for him until he gave his wife what she wanted. He could hardly sleep from worrying about that dipper. And the next day it worried him so much that he forgot all about the fright he had had the day before. Paddy roamed far and wide, looking for a dipper, and asking everybody if he had seen one anywhere.

He was crossing the road some distance from home when all at once he heard that terrible jangling and clanging again, and he jumped out of the way in a hurry. But in his haste he made a mistake. Instead of jumping

toward the brook, he jumped away from it. And there he was, unable to swim away!

Paddy Muskrat crouched behind the fence while the terrible wagon passed him. After a while he peeped between the fence rails to see if it was safe to cross the road. And there, right in the middle of the road, what should he see but a new tine dipper!

He hurried out from his hiding place, snatched up the dipper, and took it home to his wife.

That good lady was greatly pleased. And she wanted to know where Paddy found the dipper.

He told her. But how it came to be lying in the road, Paddy was quite unable to explain. It was old Mr. Crow who made the mystery clear at last.

"I understand," he said, "that a tin-peddler spent the night at Farmer Green's house. He must have lost the dipper off his wagon And since it belongs to him, of course, you'll have to give it back to him."

Mrs. Paddy looked disappointed. then she said:

"I'll just use it till he passes this way again."

But old Mr. Turtle shook he head, when he heard of Mr. Crows explanation.

"That dipper," Mr. Turtle declared, "must have been lost by the steamboat that went by yesterday."

And as for Paddy Muskrat, he didn't know quite what to think.

XI
Seeing the Doctor

For some time Paddy Muskrat had not been feeling well. Whenever he swam far he would have to stop and float on the water, in order to catch his breath. And he was not able to swim so fast as he could once.

As soon as Mrs. paddy noticed those things she began to worry. And she said so much that at last Paddy agreed to see a doctor.

"Good!" Mrs. Paddy exclaimed. "You must go over to see Aunt Polly Woodchuck, at her house under the hill. And I'll go with you, because I can't wait to find out what she says. Whatever your trouble may be, I hope she'll have some herb that will help you."

So off they started. And several times, on the way, Paddy Muskrat panted so hard that they had to stop until he caught his breath again. Luckily they found old Aunt Polly at home. She put on two pairs of spectacles and looked at Paddy Muskrat closely.

"Do you feel tired after you've swum a long way?" she asked him.
"Yes!" Paddy said.

"I thought as much," Aunt Polly remarked. "And do you like floating better than swimming?"

Paddy Muskrat admitted that he did.

"Just as I supposed!" said Aunt Polly Woodchuck. "I know what's the matter with your husband," she told Mrs. Paddy.

"He needs work. He's too fat."

"Dear me!" Mrs. Paddy exclaimed. "Can he be cured?" Is there any herb that will help him?"

"No, there isn't," Aunt Polly Woodchuck answered. "What he needs is to get a big saw and use it every day on the hardest wood he can find."

"That's a queer kind of medicines," Paddy Muskrat grumbled.

But Mrs. Paddy paid no attention to his remark.

"I'll see that he follows your advice," she promised Aunt Polly woodchuck.

Now, Paddy Muskrat did not like to saw wood. And he wished he had never gone to see Aunt Polly Woodchuck. If his wife hadn't been with him and heard what Aunt Polly said, he never would have taken her advice. But in order to have everything pleasant at home Paddy finally promised Mrs. Paddy that he would "try to do just as Aunt Polly suggested.

"There's just one thing that may prevent my sawing wood," he said. "You know I have no saw."

"I'm sure Farmer Green would be glad to let you use one of his," Mrs. Paddy told him. And that night Paddy went over to the the farmhouse. He found that Farmer Green was in bed and asleep; so he just took a saw which he

found in the barn, without waking Johnnie Green's father.

"I thought I'd better not disturb him," Paddy told his wife.

Well, the next day Paddy remarked that he expected to start sawing wood the following morning. But Mrs. Paddy made him begin at once.

"If you get any fatter," she said, "you won't be able to crawl inside the house."

He groaned when he heard that. But he took his saw and made his way to the bank of the mill-pond. Then, much as he hated to do it —he set to work to saw a big sticker wood.

Paddy found it hot, sawing wood in the sunshine on the bank of the pond. And he couldn't help wishing he was floating about in the cool water, under the shade of the great willow.

Thinking about that, he half forgot what he was doing. And without noticing his mistake, Paddy Muskrat rested one of his feet on the log, on the wrong side of the saw

XII
A Sad Accident

With one foot resting upon the log, on the wrong side of the saw, Paddy Muskrat sawed very slowly. But when he noticed his wife climbing upon the bank of the pond he began to saw faster.

Suddenly, to Mrs. Paddy's amazement, he dropped the saw and fell to the ground screaming.

She ran quickly to his side.

"What is it?" she cried. "What's the matter?"

"I've sawed off the end of my right foot!" Paddy groaned.

"There it is!" he said. And he pointed at something that lay beneath the log.

Mrs. Paddy took one look and grew faint. It was no wonder that she felt queer; for there was the toe of her husband's shoe, half buried in the sawdust!

'Stay right where you are!" she told Paddy. "I'm going to get Aunt Polly Woodchuck."

"Don't do it!" Paddy called. "I've had enough of her doctoring. I took her advice and now look at me! I'm lamed for life!.

He said so much that his poor wife didn't know what to do. She wanted to fetch Aunt Polly. But she didn't quite dare to.

If old Mr. Turtle hadn't waddled up the bank just then there no knowing what would have happened.

Mrs. Paddy was very glad to see the old gentleman.

"What shall we do?" she asked him. "My husband has sawed of the end of his right foot. Do you think we ought to saw off the end of the left one, to make them both alike?"

"That's not a bad idea," said old Mr. Turtle. "But we must be careful to make them exactly the same length."

Paddy Muskrat had been groaning and moaning and rolling upon the ground. But when he heard what his wife and old Mr. Turtle were saying he sat up and—yes! he actually shook his fist at them.

"You're not going to saw off my other foot! he shouted.

"He objects," said Mr. Turtle. "So the only thing we can do will be to sew that piece of his foot in place again."

While Mrs. Paddy hurried home to get a needle and thread, her husband lay quite still upon the ground. He sighed now and then. And Mr. Turtle fanned him.

"Does your foot hurt you much?" the old gentleman asked Paddy.

"The pain is dreadful," Paddy Muskrat answered. "I wish you would get me something to eat. Maybe I'd feel better if you did,"

Mr. Turtle was a kindhearted old chap. He went and found a choice lily bulb for Paddy, who ate it greedily. He was just about to ask Mr. Turtle to fetch a clam for him, when his wife returned.

"Now," she said to Mr. Turtle, as she threaded her needle, "if you'll please get the end of my husband's foot for me. I'll sew it on for him."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Turtle. He picked the toe of Paddy's shoe out of the sawdust. And then he stopped short. "This is strange!" he said. "The toe of this shoe is empty. there's nothing in it! Where's the end of his foot, I should like to know!"

"I hope it's not lost!" Mrs. Paddy said anxiously.

Paddy Muskrat screamed at the mere thought of such a dreadful thing.

"This is what comes of sawing wood!" he groaned. "I shall never touch a saw again."

"You needn't!" his wife promised him. "I'm sorry I urged you to borrow Farmer Green's saw. And I wouldn't think of letting you attempt such dangerous work another time."

Paddy Muskrat suddenly said that he felt better. He had discovered at last that he had sawed off nothing but the tip of his shoe, which stuck far out beyond his toes. He wasn't even scratched.

Mr. Turtle never knew the truth of the matter, though, of course, Mrs. Paddy found out later. But she had promised Paddy that he needn't saw any more wood. And being a person of her word, she told her husband that he might as well take Farmer Green's saw back to the barn.

"I can't do that!" he replied.

"Why not?" she asked.

"I promised I'd never touch a saw again. And of course, I can't break my promise," Paddy Muskrat declared.

So it was Mrs. Paddy that returned the saw. And people say that Farmer Green never even dreamed that his saw had **almost** cut off Paddy Muskrat's foot.

XIII
Brass Buttons

If it had not been for Mr. Crow, no one in the mill pond would have thought of having a policeman. You see, Mr. Crow had traveled. He had looked down upon many big towns as he flew over their outskirts on his journeys between Pleasant Valley and his

winter home in the South. And he had noticed that most cities had at least one policeman—and some of them had as many as two.

"You ought to have a policeman in this pond," he told Mr. Turtle one day. "It would save everybody a good deal of worrying for the policeman would always be on the watch for trouble. And when there was any danger he would warn everyone."

Mr. Turtle rather liked the plan.

"I've lived here almost a hundred years," he said, "and I've had to be on the lookout for danger all that time. If we had a good policeman maybe I could spend the next hundred years in peace."

"That's the idea! " said Mr. Crow.

"But where are we to find a policeman?" Mr. Turtle asked. "I don't know of any in Pleasant Valley. In fact, I never saw one in all my life."

"Oh! You'll have to find someone right in your pond," Mr. Crow told him. "All you need to do is to put a blue uniform on him and give him a club. That's the way to make a policeman. . .But he must be fat," Mr. crow added. "All policemen are fat. So what you need to do is to choose the fattest person in the pond.

"Then," said Mr. Turtle, Paddy Muskrat will have to be our policeman, for he's the fattest person in the neighborhood."

After Mr. Crow had flown away, Mr. Turtle talked the matter over with his friends

in the mill pond. And all agreed that paddy Muskrat was just the one to wear a uniform and carry a club and warn everybody when there was any danger.

Paddy was much pleased when he heard of the plan. And he felt very happy, because Mr. Frog, who had a tailer-shop, promised to make him a new blue suit with brass buttons free.

But Mrs. Paddy did not like the idea—at first.

"Won't it take you away from home a good deal?" she inquired. "I don't like to stay alone in the house, because I'm timid."

You'll be quite safe," Paddy assured her, "for I'll be on the watch for danger every minute."

"Won't you need a new suit?" she asked somewhat anxiously. "Your old one is patched, you know."

"I'm to get a new uniform with brass buttons free," Paddy told her. "Mr. Frog is going to make it for me."

Mrs. Paddy Muskrat said at once that on account of the new suit she was willing to let Paddy be a policeman.

"What color will the suit be?" she asked.

"It will be blue," Paddy told her. When she learned that, his wife seemed disappointed.

"I was hoping it would be pink," she said wistfully, "because pink is my favorite color."

Then Paddy Muskrat said good-bye to her and went straight to Mr. Frog's shop to be measured for his new clothes.

In three days the new suit was finished. Paddy tried it on; and he was much pleased with it.

"I'll wear it," he said to Mr. Frog. "And you can carry my old suit home for me."

"You can't leave my shop until you pay me!" Mr. Frog cried.

"Pay you!" Paddy exclaimed in great surprise. "You said you would make me a blue suit with brass buttons free!"

"And so I have!" retorted Mr. Frog. "Here's your bill. And you'll notice that I have not charged you a penny for the buttons.

You see, Paddy Muskrat had misunderstood. The brass buttons were all that was free. He had to pay Mr. Frog for the suit. And though he hated to do that, there was something else that he dreaded far more— and that was telling his wife about his mistake.

XIV
The New Policeman

Now that Paddy Muskrat was a policeman, in a blue suit with brass buttons, he began to shout orders to everybody in the mill pond. He wore a belt about his waist, and inside it he stuck a club which was nothing more or less than a cattail. Mr. Crow told him that it looked very much like policemen's clubs he had seen. And even if it wasn't very stout, so long

as it looked good he ought to be satisfied with it.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't be of much use in a fight," Paddy Muskrat observed.

"Why!" You don't expect to fight, I hope!" Mr. Crow exclaimed. "I see you don't know much about the way a policeman ought to behave. If there's a fight anywhere, he's supposed to go somewhere else. At least, I've always noticed that policemen do it that way."

Paddy Muskrat thanked him. But as a new policeman he became so disagreeable that soon there were a good many of his neighbors who began to think of fighting him. There was old Mr. Turtle, for instance. Paddy was forever waving his club at him and telling him to "move on!" And when Mr. Frog and his friends tried to have a singing party one evening, Paddy

THE NEW POLICEMAN

Muskrat was sure to come and order them to "make less noise!"

It seemed as if a person couldn't do anything to please Paddy Muskrat. And everybody began to be sorry that he had been chosen to guard the pond.

As a guard Paddy proved to be of little use. When Tommy Fox came nosing along the edge of the pond, or one of the Great Horned Owl family hovered about the neighborhood Paddy didn't give a warning slap on the water with his tail as he should have done. He claimed that no policeman ever gave a warning in that way. And he said that his neighbors ought to give him a policeman's whistle.

At last Paddy Muskrat abused the wrong person. Finding Fatty Coon fishing on the bank of the pond one day, Paddy waved his club at him and cried:

"Stop stealing our fish or I'll arrest you!"

It was only natural that Fatty Coon should be angry when he was spoken to like that. He pretended to be frightened, however. And Paddy Muskrat at once grew so bold that he stepped quite close to Fatty and ordered him to "be off!"

Fatty Coon leaped at Paddy. He caught hold of Paddy's belt; and the policeman found himself a prisoner.

"Now—" said Fatty Coon—"now I'm going to make you eat yourself. You can begin with your tail; and you mustn't stop eating until you have swallowed every bit of yourself—brass buttons and all!"

Paddy Muskrat was terribly frightened, "Let me go!" he shouted. "Or I shall call for help. Do you want the other policemen to

come? How would you like to fight fifty policemen?"

Fatty Coon only laughed at him.

"You're the only policeman in the pond," he said.

"Is that so?" Paddy Muskrat cried. "Do you see those clubs over there?" He pointed over Fatty's shoulder.

Fatty Coon couldn't help looking around. And there, not far behind him, he beheld—sticking up in the air—as many as a hundred policemen't clubs, exactly like the one Paddy Muskrat had in his hand. As Fatty gazed at the clubs they seemed to wave at him.

All at once Fatty Coon was frightened. He let go of Paddy Muskrat's belt and made for a tree as fast as he could run.

The Paddy thew away his own club and went home. He told his wife to cut the brass

buttons off his blue suit, because he said he would not be a policeman any longer. He had had one bad fright, being a policeman and he didn't care to have another.

As for Fatty Coon, he never went near the mill pond for almost a year.

What he thought were policemen's clubs were only cattails waving in the breeze. But Fatty Coon didn't know that.

XV
Throwing Stones

One evening Paddy Muskrat was eating a dainty morsel on the bank, near his home. He had dug a sweet tasting root from the bottom of the pond and had swum to the shore to enjoy it.

As Paddy sat there, a wagon came clattering down the road. But Paddy paid no

attention to the sound. It happened too often, every day, to cause him any uneasiness.

The wagon stopped. But that, too, had happened before. And still Paddy Muskrat continued his meal.

Then several stones came sailing through the air. Some of them splashed into the pond. And some of them struck the bank near the spot where Paddy Muskrat crouched over his tidbit.

"He dropped the root at once and plunged into the pond.

"It's Johnnie Green!" he said to himself savagely, as he dived out of sight and swam toward his doorway. "I don't know how he could see me from the road. But he did!"

Paddy stayed in his house until he thought Johnnie Green had had plenty of time to grow tired of throwing stones and drive on again.

The Paddy crept out of his house; for he intended to go back to the bank to finish his meal.

To his surprise the shower of stones was still falling into the pond. And since Paddy was hungry, he had to swim under water some distance from his house and find another root, which he took home to eat—though it was far pleasanter dining upon the bank, where the air was fresh.

If Paddy Muskrat was angry then, he was much angrier the next evening, when the same thing happened again. He was on the bank, eating a fresh water clam, when a wagon stopped in the road close by. Paddy paid little heed to it. Several wagons had passed while he was eating.

"I'm glad it's not that horrid Johnnie Green!" Paddy remarked between nibbles.

The words were hardly out of his mouth one a stone landed within an inch of his nose.

Paddy didn't stop to say another word to himself. He dropped the clam quickly and dived into the water, while stones went chug! chug! all around him.

"This is a little too much!" Paddy Muskrat told his friend Mr. Turtle, whom he met on his way home. "If Johnnie Green is coming here every evening to throw stones at me I shall have to move to some other neighborhood."

Now, Mr. Turtle did not want Paddy to go away.

"It's quite safe here," he said. "I've lived in this pond for almost a hundred years and nothing has ever hurt me. To be sure, I've had plenty of stones thrown at me. But I pay no attention to them"

"You must remember—" said Paddy Muskrat—"you must remember that you have a very hard back. If I had a back like yours, under which I could draw my head, I wouldn't care how many stones Johnnie Green threw at me. . . . I'm afraid I shall have to look for another place to live."

"Nonsense!" old Mr. Turtle cried. "There's no danger at all! And just to prove to you what a safe place this pond is, I'm going where the stones are falling."

So Mr. Turtle swam for the spot where the stones were chugging and splashing into the pond. He crawled out upon the bank too, and climbed on top of a rock, where he craned his neck in order to get a good view of the road.

It was not long before Mr. Turtle began to smile. And then he slipped into the water again and swam back to find Paddy Muskrat.

"It's just as I said!" Mr. Turtle told Paddy. "There's no danger. Nobody's trying to hurt anybody in this pond."

"Didn't you see Johnnie Green?" Paddy asked.

"No!" Mr. Turtle answered. "It was his father that was throwing the stones into the pond."

"His father!" Paddy Muskrat exclaimed. "I never supposed it was Farmer Green. And I must say that it's a pretty small thing for a grown man to be doing—stopping to throw stones at me. It's a boy's trick—that's what it is!"

"But he wasn't throwing stones at you." Mr. Turtle explained. "He didn't know you were on the bank. Farmer Green is simply trying to clear the road of stones. He's tired of having his wagon jolt over them every time he drives

this way. And he has made up is mind that whenever he passes the pond he'll stop and pick up a few of the stones and throw them into the water.

"So you see there's no danger," Mr. Turtle added.

"Well! I wouldn't care to be hit by a stone, whether it was aimed at me or not," Paddy Muskrat remarked.

"Just keep away from that side of the pond," Mr. Turtle advised. "It won't be long," he added.

"How long?" Paddy inquired.

"Oh! not more than forty years, I should say," was Mr. Turtle's answer.

To a person as long-lived as he was, forty years seemed nothing at all. But Paddy Muskrat thought it was a very long time. And he said so, too.

XVI
Red-Head

On hot days in summer there was nothing that Paddy Muskrat liked better than floating about in the water beneath the shade of the great willow tree.

And Paddy was not the only one that liked to do that, either. Johnnie Green and

some of the other boys that went to school in the little red schoolhouse were fond of swimming under the big willow.

Paddy Muskrat was always mad when they came for a swim in the mill pond. But there was nothing he could do—except wait until they went away. To be sure, he had spoken to Mr. Turtle about the matter and suggested that Mr. Turtle bite Johnnie Green's great-toe.

"Then maybe those boys will keep out of our pond," said Paddy Muskrat.

But Mr. Turtle said that it might make too much talk. Paddy Muskrat thought that he was really afraid to do it!

Paddy was much annoyed when—on the hottest day of the summer—Johnnie

Green and three of his playmates came to the big willow just as Paddy had begun to enjoy the cool water there.

"I hope they won't stay long," Paddy said, as he hid himself under the bank. "If I couldn't swim any better than those boys I'd be ashamed to go into the water."

The boys had not splashed in the pond long before one of them—a red haired lad—said he had to hurry home to help rake hay.

Paddy Muskrat was pleased when he heard that. He hoped that the other would soon leave, too.

For anyone in a hurry, the red-red-haired boy seemed to take a long time to dress. But at last he went off whistling merrily, as if something pleased him. He did

not sound at all like a boy leaving a cool swimming hole to go to work in a hot hayfield.

To Paddy Muskrat's great disappointment, Johnnie Green and the other two boys never made a move to leave the pond for a long time. But at last one of them crawled upon the bank beside the big willow. Soon he set up a great shouting.

"Our clothes!" he called. "Red-head's stolen our clothes!"

That pleased Paddy Muskrat. It was hard work to keep from snickering. He thought it served the boys right—for interrupting his own fun.

But Johnnie Green and his other friend did not seem pleased. They scrambled out of

the water in a hurry. And all three of them began searching for their clothes.

It was a long time before they found them. Whenever a wagon came along the road they dived into the mill-pond—though Paddy Muskrat couldn't understand why they should do that.

At last Johnnie Green came upon the clothes, hidden by the fence. But their troubles were not yet ended. The red-haired boy had tied hard knots in every garment. And it was another hour before those three angry youngsters succeeded in untying them again.

All that time Paddy Muskrat watched them. And by the time they had dressed and gone away the sun had traveled so far

toward the west that the big willow no longer cast its shadow upon the pond.

So Paddy had to wait until the next day before he could float lazily about in the shade. And he was as angry with the red-haired boy as he would have been if "Red-head" had tied knots in his clothes too!

XVII
Fish to Fry

Old Mr. Turtle shook his head.

"I don't understand it," he said. He was talking with Peter Mink, who had been lingering about the mill-pond for several days, because the fishing was good.

"What is it that you don't understand?" Peter Mink asked.

"It's about Paddy Muskrat," Mr. Turtle explained. "It seems that he's taken to eating fish."

Peter Mink looked very peevish when he heard that.

"He'd better stop that," he said, "or it will be the worse for him. Here I've come to fish in this pond. And I don't intend to have Paddy Muskrat taking any of my fish away from me.

Old Mr. Turtle bit his tongue. He was sorry that he had spoken, for Paddy Muskrat and he were good friends and he would not have liked to see Paddy hurt by Peter Mink, or anybody else.

"What makes you think Paddy Muskrat is taking my fish?" Peter demanded. Of course, the fish did not belong to him, and more than to anyone else. But that was Peter Mink's way of looking at the matter. "Have you seen him catching any?" he inquired.

"No!" said Mr. Turtle.

"Have you seen him eating any?"

"No!" said Mr. Turtle again.

"Then what reason have you for supposing such a thing?" Peter Mink asked.

"Only this," Mr. Turtle replied, "several times lately, when I've asked him where he was going and what he expected to do, Paddy Muskrat has said, "I have fish to fry!"

Peter Mink grunted.

"He's getting pretty genteel, it seems to me," he observed. "Not only is he eating fish, but he must have them fried! I'll soon put a stop to that," said Peter.

"Be careful!" Mr. Turtle warned him. "If I were you I'd leave Paddy Muskrat alone. You might get hurt, you know."

"Hurt!" Peter Mink cried. "Who would hurt me, I should like to know?"

"You might get burned in the fire," Mr. Turtle told him.

"What fire?" Peter asked.

"In Paddy Muskrat's fire," said Mr. Turtle. "He has to have a fire in order to fry his fish, I suppose."

Then, Peter Mink went off to hunt for

Paddy Muskrat. And as soon as he was out of sight Mr. Turtle swam away in exactly the opposite direction, to try to find Paddy Muskrat and warn him to look out for Peter Mink.

Mr. Turtle knew just where to look for Paddy Muskrat, so he found him first, on the bank near his house. Paddy was just about to jump into the pond for a swim when Mr. Turtle spied him.

"What you going to do?" Mr. Turtle inquired.

"I have fish to fry," Paddy Muskrat answered.

"Don't do it!" said Mr. Turtle. "I advise you to stop eating fish at once, for Peter

Mink has heard that you are catching fish and he is very angry."

Paddy Muskrat looked surprised.

"I don't care for fish!' he exclaimed. "I don't see how such a story started."

It was Mr. Turtle's turn to be surprised.

"Why!" he cried. "You just told me that you had fish to fry!"

"Yes!" Paddy said. "But I didn't really mean that. I only meant that I was very busy."

"It's a queer way of saying so," he remarked. "Do you mean to tell me that you never make a fire at all!"

"Certainly not!" Paddy Muskrat declared.

"Then," said Mr. Turtle, "if I were you I'd stop talking that way. It's misleading. And it may get you into trouble. Peter Mink is hunting for you this very minute. And he'll hurt you if he can. I'm going to stay near you for a while, so I can help you if Peter finds you."

Paddy Muskrat thanked him. And then he leaped into the pond to enjoy his swim with Mr. Turtle following some distance behind him.

Paddy hoped that he wouldn't meet Peter Mink. But he was very glad to know that Mr. Turtle was not far away.

XVIII
Scaring Peter Mink

Now I've caught you!" somebody cried. And something sharp gripped one of Paddy Muskrat's legs.

Paddy knew at once that Peter Mink had found him. He struggled to swim away. But Peter Mink held him fast.

"Been eating fried fish have you?" said Peter. "I'll teach you to leave my fish alone!"

"I haven't eaten a single fish!" Paddy Muskrat said.

"Well—you've been frying 'em," said Peter Mink, "and that always spoils 'em for me."

"I haven't fried a single fish!" said Paddy.

"I've heard differently," Peter Mink jeered. "You've been telling people that you had fish to fry."

"But I just meant that I was very busy," Paddy Muskrat told him.

"Well—you're going to be busy now," Peter Mink remarked, as he gripped Paddy's leg still harder. "And as for your excuse—I

don't believe a word of it. I know you've some fish hidden somewhere—and a fire, too. After I've finished with you, I look for them—if I have to swim up and down this pond all night."

You can see how much Peter Mink knew about a fire. He actually thought that a fire could burn under water.

All this time Paddy Muskrat was wondering where old Mr. Turtle could be. He had told Paddy that he was going to stay near him, to help him in case Peter Mink should try to hurt Paddy. And now it was time for him to help—if he was going to. Because Peter was hurting Paddy dreadfully.

Pretty soon Peter Mink gave a groan.

"What's the matter?" Paddy Muskrat asked him.

"It's my right hind-foot!" Peter said thickly. He found it rather hard to talk, because

his teeth were fastened in Paddy's leg. And bedsides that, Peter was in great pain.

"Somebody must be biting your foot," Paddy Muskrat told him.

Peter Mink tried to shake his head.

"It hurts too much for that," he said

Then Paddy Muskrat thought of a way to scare Peter.

"You don't suppose you've stepped in my fire, do you?" he inquired.

At those words Peter Mink turned pale.

"I'm afraid I have," he said. "I never felt anything just like this. My foot's beginning to grow numb, and I can't move it."

"You'd better let go of me and swim away," Paddy Muskrat advised him. "If your other hind-foot should get in the fire I'm afraid you'd never be able to walk any more.

When he heard that, Pater Mink turned still paler. He was frightened. And he loosened his hold on Paddy's leg.

Paddy Muskrat hurried home to bind up his hurts. He didn't wait to see what happened to Peter Mink. He was only too glad to get away from him.

But something happened to Peter Mink — something that surprised him. He had expected—as soon s he let go of Paddy—to swim to the banks and run away. But to his dismay he felt himself dragged straight down to the bottom of the mill pond.

At first he noticed only what seemed to be a flat stone, which appeared to e hanging from his foot. But as he looked more closely he saw that what he had taken for a flat stone was really old Mr. Turtle.

Peter Mink was terribly frightened when he saw that. He knew that when Mr. Turtle took hold of a thing he usually held fast to it for a long time.

Peter bit Mr. Turtle's head. But all his biting only made Mr. Turtle's jaws shut tighter.

Now, Peter Mink soon began feel that he would like to go to the top of the water to get a breath of air. But Mr. Turtle seemed perfectly comfortable down there at the bottom of the mill pond.

All at once Peter said to Mr. Turtle:

"Somebody took Mrs. Turtle's eggs!" When he heard that, Mr. Turtle let go of Peter Mink's foot and hurried away.

Peter Mink hurried away, too. And he would have laughed, if his foot hadn't pained him so much. For it was a whole year before that

Fatty Coon dug Mrs. Turtle's eggs out of the sand near the creak.

You see, Peter had tricked Mr.Turtle. And Peter never went near the mill pond for a long time after that.

As for Paddy Muskrat, he no longer talked about having fish to fry. When people asked him what he was going to do, he either told them—or he didn't. Ad that was the end of it.

Mr. Turtle

Brother Rabbit

Mr. Squirrel

Fluffy Coon

Fatty Coon

Jasper Jay

Jimmy Rabbit

Mrs. Coon

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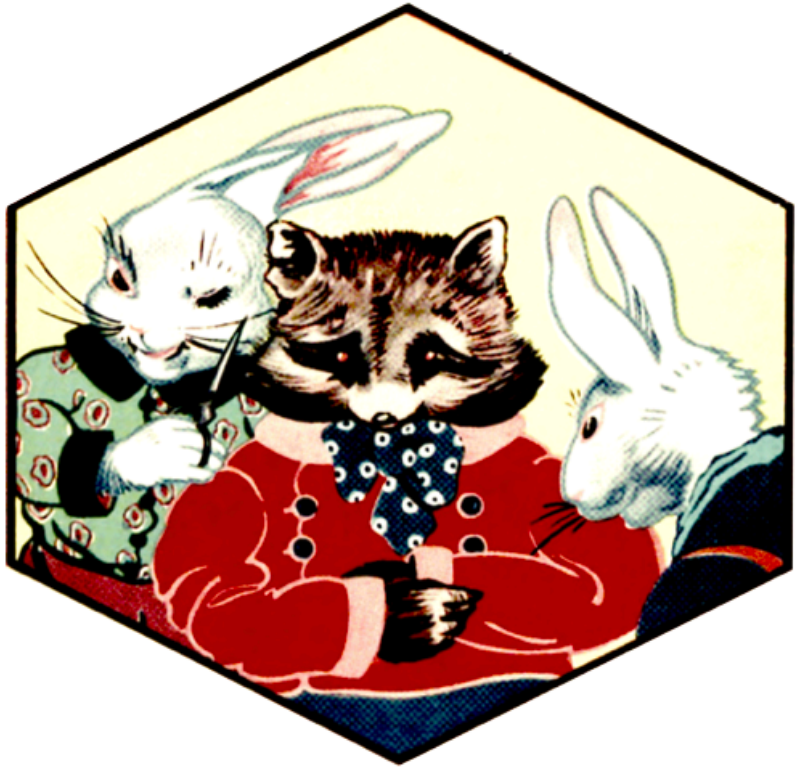

The Tale of Paddy Muskrat

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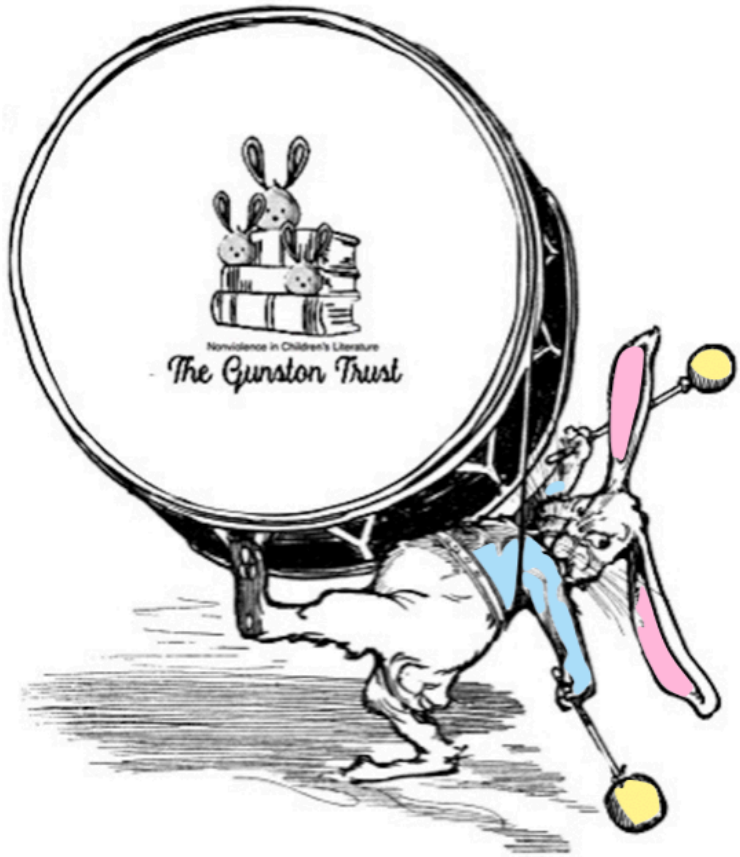

The Tale of Paddy Muskrat